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Lundi
15 mai 2017

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 15 May 2017

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 15 mai 2017

The House recessed from 1800 to 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

FAIR HYDRO ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 POUR DES FRAIS D'ÉLECTRICITÉ ÉQUITABLES

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 15, 2017, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 132, An Act to enact the Ontario Fair Hydro Plan Act, 2017 and to make amendments to the Electricity Act, 1998 and the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 / Projet de loi 132, Loi édictant la Loi de 2017 sur le Plan ontarien pour des frais d'électricité équitables et modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur l'électricité et la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): When we last debated this, we heard presentations from the member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound and the member for Nipissing. Now we go to questions and comments related to their speeches. Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to stand in the House. Unfortunately, I wasn't here for the speech from the member, but this might be my only opportunity to get to speak to this bill because it has been time-allocated. It might be my only opportunity.

The issue that folks in my riding brought to my attention and I brought to their attention this weekend at several events is that this isn't really an attempt to fix the hydro problem; it's an attempt to fix the Liberal government's problem. Simply, what they're creating is an eye in the hydro hurricane. Once the eye passes, which is in the next couple of years, people are going to be hit even harder with unpayable hydro rates. That's something that's just inexcusable at this time.

There are ways that we can actually fix or attempt to fix—work on making people's lives better regarding hydro. This government is totally, totally missing the mark on this. I only have a few seconds to explain this, but I, for the life of me, can't understand how, on one hand, you can say, "We need to sell Hydro One"—this morning, the Premier said that they were forced to spend lots of money to fix transmission lines. Now they're selling the transmission lines but they're borrowing millions and millions and millions of dollars to delay the payment crunch that people are feeling—not to eliminate the payment crunch, because the payment crunch is going to come, Mr. Speaker.

It's like when you make a minimum payment on your credit card. It might feel good for one month; it might feel good for two months; it might even feel good for six months. But when the pain comes, it will be even worse. That's the same as what's going to happen to the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: I listened to the member before dinner as he laid on his sermon on this particular bill. I want to come back to a couple of things that are really important here in the province of Ontario.

In looking at the unit 2 refurbishment at Darlington, there are a couple of things to note about it: It started on time, it's running weeks ahead of schedule, it's significantly under budget, and that refurbishment is going to avoid 300 million tonnes of carbon emissions.

That's the kind of refurbishment that wouldn't have happened under either the PCs or the NDP. The fact of the matter is that they had just allowed those nuclear stations to run into the ground.

What was the state of Pickering when our government was elected some 14 years ago?

Mr. Ted McMeekin: What was it?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Nearly all of the reactors where either offline or badly due for a refurbishment.

What was the state of Bruce? Those reactors weren't all online.

What was the state of Darlington? They were running at partial power.

Why? Neglect, neglect, neglect. The party opposite just wouldn't spend money on anything. If you won't borrow money when the price of money is almost nothing and invest the money to essentially get a brand new nuclear reactor at what amounts to half the price—right now, there are 60 companies across Ontario today contributing to that Darlington refurbishment project. That's something that keeps OPG Canada's largest, lowest-cost, cleanest power generator. That's the reason that this bill exists. Those are the benefits to Ontario.

1850

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Hillier: It's a pleasure to once again discuss Bill 132 and the spin and the nonsense that is included in this piece of legislation.

I want to quote from a column this week by Parker Gallant. The title of that is, "Wynne Spin and the 'Fair Hydro Plan.'" It starts off by saying, "One is struck by the avoidance of the truth, the sudden empathy dis-

played” by the Premier’s “blatant claims.” This is what we’re really dealing with on Bill 132: the avoidance of truth, the avoidance of fact. Nothing in this bill will alleviate the problems; it will just amplify them and exacerbate the problems that we’re facing with hydro.

In that column, and the subsequent columns, Parker Gallant has shown and demonstrated that, on top of the \$50 billion in excess payments that we’ve made under the Wynne government and the previous government on hydro costs—and that has been validated by the Auditor General—this new plan will add another \$43 billion. Now, I know the previous energy minister used to refer to a billion-dollar loss as just a cup of coffee, but as we’ve come to realize, these billions and billions are far more than a cup of coffee; they have put the people of Ontario into energy poverty. We have seen one in five Hydro One users who can’t pay their bills. Those are Third World numbers, when people can’t pay their electricity bill, where we have 60,000 people who have been disconnected from electricity. These are Third World statistics that this government has put—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you. Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is rather surprising that a bill we’ve heard about for so long, that has been on TV in northern Ontario for so long, will get so little debate.

It also puzzles me as to why the Liberals always handle the sell-off of Hydro One as “broadening the ownership.” Whenever you have to make up weasel words, it’s because you’re not really proud of what you’re doing. What you are doing is privatizing Hydro One, and if you’re not able to say, “We are privatizing Hydro One,” then don’t do it. Don’t use words like “broadening the ownership.” You cannot broaden it; it used to belong to 14 million Ontarians. Now it belongs to a couple of rich people on Bay Street and the company that they represent. This is privatization, clear and simple, but they can’t even say this. This is how ashamed they are of what they are doing.

They have many reasons to be ashamed. I represent the good people of Nickel Belt. Most of Nickel Belt is serviced by Hydro One. We have no choice. There is no natural gas. If you have oil, you better have \$1,000 hanging around when they come and fill up your tank or you’re not going to be on oil very long to heat your house. And if any of you have ever heated your house with wood in the middle of winter in northern Ontario, then you know what hardship looks like, because it is just too hard. We heat with electricity and we pay through the roof, and that’s wrong. It’s one more reason why this government should be ashamed of what they’re doing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That’s four questions and comments. We return to the member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound for his response.

Mr. Bill Walker: It’s a pleasure to provide some final comments and thank the members from Timiskaming—Cochrane, Mississauga—Streetsville, Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, and Nickel Belt.

The member from Timiskaming—Cochrane, virtually to summarize what he said in here: Really, this isn’t an

attempt by the Liberals to fix hydro; this is an attempt to fix their image for the next election—electioneering, I think, is the comment we heard earlier. He did talk about them delaying payment like a credit card. You can keep moving it out, Mr. Speaker, but at some point you have to pay that debt.

The member from Mississauga—Streetsville talked about the Darlington refurbishment—absolutely, I’m very proud to support the nuclear industry. What I don’t want him to do is take all the credit here, because in the case of Bruce Power, that’s a lot of private investment, where there’s no government money, and they’ve done a bang-up job. Why are we telling them not to produce power so we can actually put up more energy, when we spent \$6 billion in the last number of years paying people to take our surplus power?

The member from Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington talked about, again, kicking it down the road—\$43 billion this is going to cost our next generation and the generation after that—rather than actually addressing it.

The member from Nickel Belt talked about limiting debate, using weasel words and the reality of broadening ownership. Hydro One was owned by the people of Ontario, and they’re actually moving away from that—a fire sale, despite 85% of the people saying that they should actually not do that.

A question that needs to be asked is: Why did they move the money onto the books of OPG? The minister apparently said that OPG has the expertise necessary. I’m not certain, but I don’t think that anybody in Ontario believes that OPG is an investment banker with huge credentials. I think it’s a case of the Auditor General knows that they can attribute it to their books if it’s on the government’s books and not on OPG’s, so they’re actually hiding the money there.

At the end of the day, the debt retirement charge is going to be four times bigger. There’s another \$25 billion to \$43 billion that it’s going to cost the next generation and generations after that. They could have actually stopped some contracts and saved that money for Ontario taxpayers; they didn’t, and at the end of the day, this is truly government re-election spin.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much.

I should remind the members that we have this night sitting; of course, as we know we’re here until 9:30. I would hope that we can keep the debate positive, civil and not cross the line into unparliamentary language. It’s just a general reminder. It’s not addressing anyone specifically.

Further debate?

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you, Speaker. Timing is everything.

I’m pleased to rise today on behalf of my constituents of Hamilton East—Stoney Creek and respond to Bill 132.

The government has, with a straight face, given this bill the laughable title of the Fair Hydro Act.

First, I would like to commend my colleague from Toronto–Danforth for his exhaustive lead on this bill. It certainly isn't easy to get a handle on such a complex, opaque and horrendously expensive piece of legislation, especially when it's dropped on the Thursday before the second-last sitting week of the session. He described it very clearly and simply as a perfect Liberal bill, with four years of gains to the Liberal Party in return for 26 years of pain for the people of Ontario. One thing is clear above all else, Speaker: Bill 132, also known as Premier Wynne and the Liberals' hydro borrowing scheme, will cause hydro bills to soar.

This Premier and the Liberal government are borrowing billions to get themselves through the election and—their dream—the election after that. But after 2021, bills will skyrocket again. That shows this Premier's priorities: votes for herself, not affordability for Ontario families. The people of Hamilton East–Stoney Creek cannot take anymore hikes on their hydro bills. The people of Windsor, the people of Timmins, the people of Toronto, the people of Sault Ste. Marie—none of them can take it any more. Ontarians are at their breaking point. The province of Ontario is at a tipping point, and this monstrous legislation might be the final push over the hill.

Bill 132 is going to cost Ontarians \$40 billion over the next 30 years. That's on top of—Speaker, on top of—the \$170 billion the Auditor General estimates this government will have cost us in electricity rates by 2032 through, strictly, incompetence. That's not the cost of clean energy; it's the cost of incompetence. And this completely unnecessary \$40 billion isn't the cost of clean energy either, Speaker. Bill 132 brands it as such, labelling it as the “clean energy adjustment.” It's not. It is the price the Liberals are willing for you to pay to give them a hope of re-election.

Even people inside the Liberal government have had enough of the incompetence, enough of the hidden plans, enough of the contempt for the people of Ontario. The confidential cabinet documents leaked by a whistleblower confirmed what people already guessed: that they'd be paying for Wynne's hydro plan one way or another—they're going to pay for it.

The NDP asked the Financial Accountability Officer to scrutinize this plan, and we're demanding that the Premier and the Minister of Energy turn over all—all—documents needed to allow that to happen. If they have nothing to be ashamed of, or nothing to hide or be afraid of, why would they hide the numbers? Because, Speaker, the legislation is the most brazen, most shameless and most expensive attempt to win an election in the history of this province, probably in the history of Canada.

1900

They call it a fair hydro plan. Frankly, it's a fake hydro plan. It does nothing to address the structural problems of the system, such as privatization, poorly designed contracts and a mismatch between supply and

demand. Instead, it buys a short-term balm for Liberal poll numbers at the cost of chronic pain for Ontario taxpayers until the late 2040s. Children not yet born will be paying for this folly when they are starting families of their own.

As our leader has said, it is the height of arrogance for this government to ram through such a consequential and expensive piece of legislation in the last few sitting days of a session before the House rises. They're doing it to avoid the scrutiny of the public, the FAO and the opposition. They want to be able to show their faces on the summer barbecue circuit with some apparent good news for all. Well, the people will not be fooled by this pre-election gift package this time.

I don't know how many scandals a party is allowed over 14 years, but this government is surely approaching the cosmic limit. For two months, they bragged about their great hydro plan, with no details and nothing to back it up, without telling anyone that it would actually cause hydro rates to go up. Yet again, the Premier has prioritized her political interests, and the interests of her friends, at the expense of everyone else. The only people to emerge richer for 14 years of Liberal rule are Bay Street bankers and Liberal insiders.

I am continually shocked by the arrogance and the audacity of this Liberal government in ignoring the 80% of people who don't want Hydro One sold. The government claims they are selling Hydro One in order to raise \$4 billion for infrastructure. They say, “We can't build anything without it.” What about the \$40 billion that this sham of a hydro plan in Bill 132 is going to cost us? That could pay for 10 times the amount of infrastructure that the sell-off of Hydro One is allegedly paying for. That's a huge amount of infrastructure; that would be transformative if it were invested in social housing, long-term care and public transit. Instead, they're blowing it all on a short-term gimmick in a desperate attempt to win re-election.

They're locking us all into even longer contracts to pay for this. They are tying the hands of future governments, so that when this government is booted out of office by fed-up Ontarians, whoever takes over will find themselves managing a province with a \$40-billion millstone.

Let me offer you a contrast, Speaker. Our pharmacare plan would provide essential medicines to every Ontarian—life-changing; in some cases, life-saving; and most certainly cost-saving. The \$40 billion burned up by this disaster of a bill would pay for pharmacare for over 80 years. We could literally pay for a lifetime's worth of essential medicines for every Ontarian, or we could do as the Liberals are doing and try to spend our way to re-election.

How will history judge their choice? How will history judge this government?

Schedule 1 of Bill 132 enables a complex and opaque alternative financing scheme that will buy the Liberals just four years of stable, slightly lower hydro rates for residential and some other consumers.

Complex and opaque alternative financing scheme: Those are the six words that could describe far too many of the boondoggles inflicted on Ontario in the last 14 years.

This short period of relative peace will be followed by years of sharply rising hydro rates, and they'll ultimately force Ontario taxpayers to spend two decades paying back private investors with hydro bills that will be much higher than they would otherwise be.

For each dollar that a current taxpayer saves from now until 2026, future taxpayers will need to pay back \$2, making payments until 2048. In most cases, these are the very same people, so for every dollar the government is leaving in your wallet today, they're putting a hold on \$2 in your bank account later.

More good news, Speaker: The ghost of the debt retirement charge is returning to haunt us in the name of the clean energy adjustment. The clean energy adjustment has nothing to do with clean energy. It is a long-term loan repayment to cover the cost of rebates this plan provides in the first four years.

Bill 132 creates an investment bank within OPG to finance these short-term rebates. Why in OPG? OPG's legislated role is an operator of generation facilities. It's not supposed to be a financial engineering firm. But by using OPG and an investment bank, the government doesn't have to borrow upfront to pay for the rebates it is offering over the next four years. It would be cheaper to fund these rebates through a government bond than through private financing, because the Ontario government can borrow at very low rates. So we'll pay billions of dollars more for the privilege of making the Liberals' books look cleaner.

This bill creates an investment asset that can be sold to investors, giving them legal claim on future payments by Ontario ratepayers, funded by the clean energy adjustment. It's more money for Bay Street, Speaker, yet again, at the expense of ordinary Ontarians, all in the name of making this Liberal government's books look a little less frightening. Frankly, it's disgusting.

In case a future government tries to rein this monster in, the Liberals have laid traps for us all, too. Bill 132 includes provisions to bind future governments, preventing them from weakening the property rights of investors, including their right to claim clean energy adjustments from ratepayers. It's interesting, Speaker.

So what is advertised as a fair hydro plan is actually a piece of financial engineering that incurs massive off-books borrowing to solve a short-term political problem for the Liberals, and then securitizes part of Ontario's hydro bills the next 30 years in order to repay it. It's a Trojan Horse, Speaker. How does this government dare to ram this outrageous piece of legislation through the House without proper public consultation, without adequate public input, without independent scrutiny and without a rigorous assessment by the FAO?

Well, Speaker, this bill comes from the very same Liberal government that has brought in the largest single hydro increase in Ontario's history. Some 80% of the

public is opposed to this sell-off of Hydro One. On this issue, the government is deaf to public opinion because it only has ears for its friends on Bay Street.

The Minister of Energy tells us that he has been working with the Ontario Energy Board and the Independent Electricity System Operator to prepare this legislation. But, Speaker, the government turned those agencies into puppets of the minister last year with Bill 135. I stood here, Speaker, almost a year ago to the day, in opposition to that disastrous piece of legislation. Bill 135 relegated the OEB and the IESO to mere arms of the government. It removed their planning and approval authority. It stripped them of their independence, leaving them with little real function other than implementing the government's evidence-free and politically driven plans.

I warned that Bill 135 would make it even easier for powerful private interests to lobby the government to approve expensive and risky energy projects without being subject to tough, independent, public scrutiny. What do we have today, Speaker? Another gift to corporate interests, another bad deal for the people of Ontario.

Speaker, this legislation does exactly the opposite of what it says on the tin. This is Trump-like stuff, Speaker: the affordable health care act, the fair hydro plan—bills and policies that do the exact opposite of what they claim, the exact opposite of what they are named, sold by people with no interest other than their own re-election who know full well the long-term cost of these proposals. The government is cynical. It's arrogant, and it has no respect for the Legislature or for any other checks and balances in our province.

When it came to the privatization of Hydro One, one of the most consequential energy policy decisions ever taken by the government of this province, the Liberal government bulldozed through every check and balance that we had. It refused to submit privatization plans to Ontario Energy Board review. The then Minister of Energy belittled the Auditor General's critique of this government's energy policy.

At every opportunity, the Premier and her ministers claim to be committed to transparency and accountability, but with every cynical action, we see the opposite is true: protecting Hydro One from public oversight; removing Hydro One salaries from the sunshine list; defending with a straight face tenfold increases to executive salaries; removing the Auditor General's powers over government advertising; and making the cap-and-trade charge as opaque as possible, while tooting their horn on every hydro bill about taking HST off, which should never have been there in the first place.

To make sure you don't forget, Speaker, they first charge the HST on your bill, and then they take the 8% away on a line calling itself a provincial rebate—hmm. It was already there. They took it off. I don't see how that helps, but anyways.

1910

Transparency for their sales pitches, but clear as mud for the reality behind the spin: Especially on the energy file, they don't welcome scrutiny. How much time is the

bill going to see in committee? Maybe an hour, maybe two, if they're generous. Will there even be time allotted for the opposition to propose amendments? I doubt it. They will waste the opposition's time and the public's time at committee because they seldom accept any of our amendments. They don't care for constructive opposition. They don't care for public input. They think they know best, or at least they know what's best for themselves.

Maybe this is their cynicism taken to its logical conclusion: a budget rushed through the House, a \$40-billion financial scheme masquerading as a hydro plan rammed through the House in the last eight days of the session. Because they saw our hydro plan, they came up with a response on the back of a napkin, and then took the last two months to work out how to turn the sketch on the napkin into legislation.

This government says that Bill 132 is about smoothing the global adjustment. It's about one thing and one thing only: smoothing their re-election proposals and prospects. They say it's about generational fairness, that today's electricity consumers shouldn't have to shoulder the burden of energy policies alone, that we should conscript future Ontarians into service in the name of fairness. Speaker, that's a joke, but one that rings hollow. Future generations are being pressed into service to pay the cost of the Liberals' disastrous energy policies because there's no one else left to pay for them today.

Ontarians are maxed out. Bills in 2026 will be as high as they could have been without this plan. Then they get higher, much higher than they would have been without the plan. Bills will increase by over 60% between 2021 and 2028, an even faster increase than Ontarian rate-payers have endured over the last seven years. From 2028 to 2048, the plan will cause hydro bills to be an average of 10% higher than they would be otherwise. It's simply outrageous. People cannot take it anymore, and they need to know the truth now, not 10 years from now.

This government's failed energy policies are costing jobs in my riding, one by one at first, much worse every time a business shuts shop entirely or moves to an affordable jurisdiction. This province needs a sustainable and affordable energy policy—no band-aids, no tricks. And if the government isn't capable of this, and it's crystal clear that they aren't, it is time for them to step aside for the good of the province and let someone else come in to try to clean up the monstrous mess they've created in the last 14 years.

The NDP has a plan to get hydro bills down by as much as 30%, and to keep them down, and to own the utility. That includes putting Hydro One back into public hands.

Interjections.

Mr. Paul Miller: It is not going to be easy, and with every failed piece of legislation, like Bill 132, it gets even harder.

Interjections.

Mr. Paul Miller: I hear some heckling from the other side. They say, "How are you going to do it? It's not go-

ing to be easy." Well, if you didn't sell another 25% or 30%, making it harder for people to buy it back—that might be a problem. I think people understand that cleaning up the Liberal mess isn't going to be easy. They're right about that. It's not going to be easy, but it can be done. It is going to take more than short-term slippery tricks to get it going. Even the gas plant fiasco cost only \$1 billion. Bill 132 is a Trojan Horse with 40 gas plants' worth of waste packed into it. This Liberal government's hydro borrowing deal will cause hydro bills to soar.

They say that history repeats itself first as tragedy, then as farce. Mike Harris and the Progressive Conservatives attempted to privatize Hydro One but were forced to back down by the groundswell of public opposition. The Liberals then repeated the privatization, and the tragedy was that they went ahead in the face of 80% public opposition. This \$40-billion play for an election is a farce. It's a custard pie in the face of Ontario voters, courtesy of the Liberal Party.

The Liberals are bringing this bill in at the last minute, shutting down the public's right to take a look at it before the vote. The Premier and the Minister of Energy plan to plow this through in just eight sitting days. We cannot vote for this, Speaker. Bill 132 does not deserve our support. The Liberal Party and the Premier have a majority in this Legislature. There's nothing that the NDP can do to stop the Premier from plowing ahead with this bill and causing hydro bills to soar even higher after the election. But my party and I cannot and will not vote in favour of raising hydro bills. We have a plan to cut electricity bills by 30% and to bring Hydro One back into public hands. It's a better plan for Ontarians. It's a better plan for everyone except Bay Street and the Liberal insiders. It's certainly a better plan than Bill 132, and it's one we've committed to implementing should we form the next government.

We are at a tipping point, Speaker. The people can't take the hikes on their hydro bills anymore. And it will get worse. The Liberals are bringing the hikes and continue to bring the hikes. They're postponing them for a few years, but then they'll come faster than ever before thanks to this disgraceful scheme.

This bill is a product of a desperate government. This bill is enabled by years of bad legislation that reduced accountability, suppressed criticism, suppressed evidence and suppressed expertise. This bill was born of arrogance and of a real contempt for the public's ability to see the terrible bargain being made for them. This bill is a disaster for the people of Ontario, and I will proudly vote against it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Reza Moridi: It's a great pleasure to rise in this House and speak to Bill 132, the Fair Hydro Act.

Mr. Speaker, our electricity system before 2003 was in bad shape. Ontarians remember the blackout just in 2003, and many Ontarians, of course, would remember brown-outs. And many Ontarians will remember that our nuclear power stations were in very bad shape. Ontario Hydro, in

those days, had to shut down a few reactors at the Pickering nuclear power station. This was the status of our electricity system before we came to office in 2003.

When we came to office, we basically inherited a system, a big electricity machine: nuclear power stations, hydro power stations, coal power stations, transmission lines and substations. They were all in very, very bad shape because previous governments didn't invest anything in repair and maintenance and upgrading.

We started investing in upgrading our system. Actually, we invested \$50 billion in upgrading our electricity system. Indeed, we shut down all coal-fired plants. Our air today is much, much cleaner than it used to be before 2003. We built and renovated 10,000 kilometres of power lines, which is, just to put it in perspective, the distance between Toronto to Vancouver and back from Vancouver to Toronto. Those are the investments we have made. Of course, those investments had a cost to Ontarians, a cost to ratepayers. We heard from the people of Ontario that they were not happy with the prices because the prices were going up. That's why we have brought this Fair Hydro Act, Bill 132. We are giving a 25% reduction to Ontarians on electricity prices.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's always a pleasure to follow a very passionate speech by the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek. What he really said a number of times was that people in his riding, as in my riding, can't take it anymore: the increased costs, the pressure on them. I think what I hear him saying in many cases is similar to many of us: just moving that debt out—all it's doing is shifting the burden to the next generation. It's absolutely unacceptable that they would continue to pretend that this is good for us, that they're going to spend another \$25 billion to \$43 billion. They've refinanced it, they've remortgaged it, but at some point somebody has to pay that bill, and that's going to be our kids and grandkids.

Currently, we have the highest rates in energy. They're saying they're going to give you this 25% relief. It's your own money they're giving you back, and they're borrowing money to do that, to give you short-term gain for long-term pain. And that's at the most historically low interest rates we've ever had. We spend \$12 billion on interest payments. What happens when those rates start to go up? At the end of the day, we're very concerned.

They're bringing back the debt retirement charge. It's going to be four times more than it was when they took it off.

Again, I'm not certain how they can look anybody in Ontario in the face and say, "This is a good thing for you."

We've talked about small businesses and the rates that they're paying. In fact, the debt retirement charge, I don't believe, is coming off for small businesses. Little grocery stores, for example, in my riding are really becoming worried about the cost and the impact of hydro. They can

spin whatever numbers they want, but that person doesn't get to push it out 10 years to pay their bill; they have to pay it every month. They have to be answerable to the people they have taken the power from. We've had 15 years of mistakes, and they're now going to move that out and expect to say to the people of Ontario, "Here, we're going to give you a bit of your money back. Pretend that it's all good in your world." Things are just going to continue to go down. Short-term gain, long-term pain, and that's very troubling for me.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to join the debate today and comment on my colleague from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek's elaborate speech. He laid out the case as to why New Democrats just simply can't support this bill. We are hearing from our communities that not only do they not agree with the sell-off of Hydro One—over 80% of Ontarians don't agree with the province bankrolling infrastructure spending by selling off one of our most valuable or the most valuable asset. Secondly, they don't trust this government any longer. You have lost the trust of people in our communities. If you are not hearing it, then I would suggest that the government suffers from a measure of tone deafness that might play itself out in the next election.

I briefly took a look at a couple of polls, as recent as I could find them. Just to give some contrast to the Premier's polling numbers at the moment, the Premier has a 12% approval rating as of March 24. That's an Angus Reid poll. The current President of the United States, Donald Trump, has an 84% disapproval rating in Canada, which means, ostensibly, he has a 16% approval rating, meaning that Donald Trump is more popular than the current Premier of the province of Ontario. You have to be doing something pretty bad to get down to those depths.

I will point to the remark by our friend from Timiskaming-Cochrane, who said that Bill 132 does not solve the problem. It solves or attempts to solve the Liberals' problem, one they have created over 14 long years of governance, tired years of governance. We can't wait not only to see some real action on the part of a government, but we can't wait to get rid of this government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Under our plan, bills would be 25% lower on average. Any increases would be held to the rate of inflation for four years. Those who have been facing the highest distribution charges in our province would see even more relief and so would those with low incomes. These households would see as much as a 40% to 50% reduction. If passed, it would be the largest cut to electricity rates in Ontario history.

Our plan would build on the 8% rebate announced in January, tripling the reduction up to 25% on average for all residential customers. This legislation allows us to

implement two key parts of that plan. First, we're refinancing the global adjustment, which could be likened to the refinancing of a mortgage, to spread the significant investments we have made building Ontario's clean and reliable electricity system over a longer period. This will ensure greater fairness for current and future ratepayers.

Second, this legislation makes changes to how some electricity social programs are paid for. These programs are currently funded by electricity ratepayers, but the proposed Fair Hydro Act would shift these costs to provincial revenues. Making this change would bring a little bit of relief for all ratepayers. It also opens up the opportunity to expand these programs, providing extra support to some of our most vulnerable. Relief for those with the highest distribution rates would be expanded by increasing the supports offered in the rural or remote rate protection program. This program is an automatic subsidy applied to lower distribution rates for those in high-cost areas. Currently, about 330,000 homes receive it. In the expanded program, that would be about 800,000 homes. Of course, the PCs have no plan, and the NDP will vote against it even though it's good for their constituents.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We conclude our questions and comments. We return to the member for Hamilton East-Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you to the Minister of Research, Innovation and Science. I only have one thing in his comments I disagree with. It was the blackout that was caused back—I remember that blackout because I sat on the Stoney Creek hydro commission. That blackout was caused by a squirrel in Ohio. In reference to the brownouts and all those things that happened, what happened was that—the transmission systems have been separated now. We were tied into New York and Ohio. That's why we had problems. Now we're on our own, so it's going to be a lot better.

Thank you to the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. I think we have a meeting of the minds on this issue. We may not agree on everything, but we do agree on this.

Thank you to the member from Essex, who hits the nail on the head 99% of the time, and I think that's one of the 99% of the times.

The member from Barrie seems to think the NDP's program is not that good. She is so outdated with this and really doesn't have a handle on what's going on here. And I'm sure the people of Ontario will not share her opinion about what's going on in our communities. I feel the people in Barrie are going to have to shake their heads a little bit at some of the comments that have come from her.

The bottom line is, she keeps attacking the NDP, and I always say nobody kicks a dead horse. The reason they kick a dead horse is because we have a better plan and they know it. They're just grasping at straws to get money to pay for their mistakes, and down the road our grandkids and our kids will be paying for their bad decisions that are happening right now. And it's continuing, Speaker.

The worst part about it is, they know it. I don't know how they can look in a mirror, but they know what's going on and they won't even rebel against the bad leadership going on in their party. They won't even stand up for the people of this province. That's bad representation, in my opinion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I recognize the member for Haldimand-Norfolk.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I wasn't planning on speaking so early, but I'd be glad to. I'd like to share my time with the member for Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington.

Interjections.

Mr. Toby Barrett: He's very eager to say a few words this evening; I can tell.

There's a figure of speech where apparently contradictory terms appear in conjunction. It's known as an oxymoron. The phrase that comes to mind is "Fair Hydro Act." Any time the words "fair" and "hydro" appear in the same sentence from this government, by my definition, my recollection of English grammar, that would be an oxymoron.

There is nothing fair about how this government has handled the hydro file. We're going into an election next year. Who knows? Maybe this summer, maybe next fall—we went through this same debate before the last election, and well before that I was hearing cries from my constituents: "Not fair."

It goes back to the wind turbines that were erected—this may well be three elections ago—down in my riding, down in Clear Creek, where the first ones to go up were through AIM power generation. People felt that wasn't fair at the time. Some people were kind of intrigued with the idea, and then they erected them close to homes down there along Lake Erie, along a tourist area. It is really unfortunate to put these behemoths next door to beautiful, pristine places along Lake Erie, where people from the city like to come down and travel.

Another example of unfairness is in Haldimand county, also in my riding. There are parts of Haldimand county where it doesn't matter which window you look out of from your house; you see an industrial wind turbine. That's not fair to those people. They have a major investment in their home. Many of them have picture windows for a reason. Guess what they get to look at?

The cries of "Not fair" accelerated when the electricity rates started to skyrocket. This can go back, really, 14 years. Speaker, you may recall the last few months that we were government members, the electricity rates were frozen at 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour—far from that now. I ask people across the way, are they not hearing this as well from their constituents? We hear more cries of "Not fair," and "No," and "This is a public utility," with the announcement of the selling off of Hydro One, the genesis going back well over 100 years, one of Ontario's oldest assets. We've had that distribution system going back to Sir Adam Beck's day. Some may argue with this, but try to put it together. Think of Niagara Falls. That

system was generated under the phrase “Power to the people.”

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I tour so many factories and businesses in my riding, particularly in the last year, and the indications of unfairness—there are so many other problems: natural gas prices, access for people who want to work. There are many, many problems with industry now, and regrettably we've seen so many of them, of their own volition pretty well, fade away or pack up; or they get that visitor, that email from the economic development department from Ohio or, down our way in tobacco country, the companies that come up from North Carolina and Tennessee. They may say, “Not fair.” Often-times they give me a phone call before they leave, basically to say goodbye.

So how can we be debating legislation that has a phrase in there, “the Fair Hydro Act”? To bring in legislation like this that's obviously related, as we've heard earlier this evening, to the sagging popularity of the present government—again, a bit of an obfuscation here in the sense that the 25% reduction we hear so much about is actually a 17% reduction, allocated over at least one generation. The 8% HST subtraction had already been announced.

So we see a short-term goal here, I guess a short-term gain for some in this Legislature, and long-term pain for the rest of us and certainly for our grandchildren. We know that by 2022, average monthly residential bills will jump to an average of \$142 a month, so people will be complaining again. By 2024, Ontarians will see the highest rates jump to the highest ever, at \$161 a month on average. We are known for having the fastest-rising rates in North America. This four-year plan really is going to do very little to ameliorate that trend. What's worse, Liberal rates will jump again in 2026 to an average of \$183 a month.

So there are questions of fairness, questions of unfairness, all borne essentially—and I think this is really the sad part—on the backs of future generations, generations yet to be born. This is something you see with poor fiscal mismanagement.

I ask people to take a look at the preamble of this bill. It talks about “removing barriers ... and promoting opportunities.” It talks about the costs of financing these investments and associated charges, and, again, they make it very clear, they will be “allocated fairly”—if you can believe that—“among present and future generations.” That may make sense if you're building a nuclear plant, where you depreciate that over a number of years, but not just to pay the electricity bills of today.

I think those are the main points that I wanted to make, Speaker, and I wish to defer to the honourable member to the left.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the member for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Randy Hillier: On Bill 132, the scheme to make Ontario's hydro plan more unfair that's before the House

tonight for debate needs to be examined. I started off in the earlier discussions, in questions and comments, talking about the column, the story, in the May 12 National Post where Parker Gallant, the author, referred to Premier Wynne's statement on the announcement of Ontario's Fair Hydro Plan, that “one is struck by the avoidance of truth” and “the sudden empathy displayed” by these “blatant claims.” Avoidance of truth, I think, is an appropriate phrase.

It goes on further to say, in his column, that “once again the Premier avoids telling us the whole story.” So let's see if we can get into a little bit more of the whole story so people can understand what shell game, what chicanery is going on here with this Bill 132, because it really is. Chicanery, I think, is the best word to explain it. Under schedule 1 of the bill, the act establishes a framework under which the costs associated with the “clean energy initiative” are to be allocated among present and future consumers. They're going to decide and allocate future costs.

In part III of schedule 1, part III requires certain electricity consumers to pay an amount in respect of the “clean energy adjustment.” Now, that's the term that they used in the leaked cabinet document that we have, the “clean energy adjustment.” They used the term, the decarbonization of our electrical grid, but we know what they're talking about here. This is about moving money around and trying to disguise how that money is being moved around so that it can't be examined with clarity.

Under part IV of this bill, the act provides for the purpose of calculating the “fair allocation amount” to consumers. I'm not sure if this Liberal government knows the meaning of fairness when it comes to allocating costs to consumers.

Part V is an interesting part of schedule 1. Part V creates a “regulatory asset.” Now, who has ever heard of a regulatory asset? We know what typical assets are, and typical liabilities, but this is a manufactured asset created through this piece of legislation. It's created under section 25 and, under it, the IESO has the right to recover monies under this regulatory asset. Speaker, what is this all about? This is supposed to be about helping people pay their hydro bills. That's what we were told, that it's about helping people with their hydro bills.

Let me take a look under schedule 2 of the act. Section 79 is amended so that “certain classes of rural or remote consumers may be funded out of money appropriated by the Legislature.” So there's a shift. These monies are being taken now, moving that cost of the hydro—not getting rid of the systemic failures of the hydro system, but putting the burden on all taxpayers.

Section 2: Section 79.2 of the act is repealed and replaced, and it says this “program, the Ontario Electricity Support Program, is repealed and replaced,” but the program will continue. So it's repealed, it's replaced, but it will continue. Astonishing. But now it will be funded out of money appropriated by the Legislature. Once again, the chicanery is in play here, that's moving and making things appear that really aren't factual.

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Let's take a look. We want to talk about the facts of this bill. I'll refer to that leaked cabinet document from March of this year that the Premier relied heavily on in the crafting of this legislation. It's important to dispel some of the myths that have been suggested over there.

Here, it says right in it:

"The vast majority of GA costs now stem from greenhouse gas emissions-free renewable ... facilities, as well as natural gas plants that were constructed to ... replace coal-fired capacity."

"Generators in Ontario received contracted or regulated rates, which are typically designed to recover capital, financing, and fixed operations costs. The GA recovers these fixed costs of running the province's generation fleet, as well as the cost of conservation programs."

Now, it's interesting: Nowhere in that document does it say it's about the cost to rebuild our infrastructure. Nowhere in the cost is it about building new transmission lines. The global adjustment is a cost for conservation programs and these foolhardy generating contracts that this government has been engaged in.

It's interesting to note that we often hear this Liberal government talk about how the system was in chaos and confusion and unreliable and inoperable until they got engaged in it, but let me just make a statement here, from the Auditor General: She noted in her December 2015 annual report that power outages have increased by 24% and they last 30% longer with this new-and-improved grid that the Liberals are so bound to promote. Can you imagine? This money that has been spent—because it hasn't been invested, it has been spent—has greased the palms of lots and lots of generating contracts here. But in the end, the Premier has created an electricity system that fails more frequently and fails for longer than previously.

But listen to the words that they use, Speaker. Again in the leaked document: "The GA Smoothing option under consideration is illustrative"—the "Smoothing." This is what this government is doing: They're massaging what is going on. They're very good at crafting up words that hide their actions and their activities. They're very good at creating those words to try to hide, but that's \$12.5 billion in global adjustment costs. Just think—everybody here can do a little math—\$12.5 billion in 2016 is equal to \$1,000 per person, per year. So \$1,000 per person, per year is the cost of their schemes, and they're going to continue with Bill 132.

Speaker, growing up, raising my family, there were six of us—four kids. Can you imagine \$6,000 a year just to cover up this global adjustment falsehood and mythology that—

Interjections.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Pardon me. I will withdraw, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you.

Mr. Randy Hillier: It's sometimes difficult to engage in parliamentary debate here about Liberal legislation and keep our language parliamentary with all of the reality that we see, but I will try to keep my language parlia-

mentary in describing a very unparliamentary government. That's what we have here: an unparliamentary government. They have shortened debate. They introduced this bill on Thursday. They're trying to ram this bill through tonight in this Legislature—trying to ram through this bill. They're trying to put the screws to Ontario—pardon me, Speaker, I withdraw; that's unparliamentary. But that's what they're trying to do to the people of Ontario with these actions: \$12.5 billion of GA soothing—or smoothing. Isn't that astonishing? Isn't it unacceptable that they would put that to the people of Ontario, nail the people of Ontario for \$12.5 billion, and say, "Well, we're going to smooth it out while we nail you for \$12.5 billion"?

It's astonishing, Speaker, and it's astonishing that the members opposite are standing up and allowing their Premier, our Premier—they are allowing their government to do this to the people of Ontario. They're allowing their government to nail hard their constituents, the people who actually voted for them, the people who put them here, who pay their wages. They turn their backs on those people, those very constituents, and they allow their minister and their Premier to nail them hard for another \$12.5 billion in global adjustments and another \$43 billion in costs—a thousand dollars per person for every man, woman, and child in Ontario on the global adjustment; \$43 billion, another \$3,000 for every man, woman, and child—for them, refinancing and the chicanery that this Liberal government is engaged in.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to comment on the speech by our colleague the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington. He's always insightful and gives us cause for reflection in here. Even if it isn't the most parliamentary language, sometimes that's the only language. Sometimes those are the only words to use when we're trying to express the frustration of our communities.

Speaker, you know what's especially egregious about the actions of this government? It's that this is all done under the guise of having to find revenue for infrastructure: for infrastructure spending that they have stated and quoted as being \$130 billion over the next 10 years. Then it changed to \$160 billion over the next 14 years, assuming, presuming that Ontarians even want them here for the next 14 months, let alone the next 14 years.

People are fed up with this government, Speaker. Putting out projections of multi-billion-dollar expenditures on infrastructure is laughable to members of our community because they don't see this government lasting over the next 14 months.

That being said, we can only surmise that if, indeed, they did get the opportunity to spend those massive amounts of public dollars, taxpayer dollars, they would do so in such a reckless way that we would see a replication of how they have done it in the past, wasting, as the Auditor General pointed out, \$8 billion over the last nine years on P3s—public-private partnerships, alternative fi-

nancing schemes—where they didn't have to, where they should not have done it, where it didn't deliver good value for money. That's what we can expect them to do with any newfound money. We can't afford it, Speaker. Our communities can't—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you.

Questions and comments?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm very pleased to comment on the speeches by the member from Haldimand–Norfolk and oh, my goodness, Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington. One of the things that really, really surprised me, Speaker, is that both of those members represent rural ridings. I've heard those members repeatedly stand in this House during debate, during question period, and talk about the particular stresses of customers in rural areas, those who live in the R1 or R2 zones, which are in rural and northern Ontario, who traditionally have higher distribution costs because of the fact that their houses are further apart, low density, and therefore they've traditionally been charged more for distribution.

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One of the things in the Fair Hydro Act is in fact legislation that will change that. This legislation creates the rural or remote rate protection plan, to be paid for by the taxpayers of Ontario. What that means is that taxpayers from all over Ontario will be helping those taxpayers, those homeowners in rural areas to lower their distribution rates. There are about 330,000 homes across Ontario that are currently in the R1 and R2 zones, and I would think most of the houses in those members' ridings may well be in those zones. They didn't mention that their residents would be benefitting from that additional money that will be coming off their hydro bills.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: It was certainly a pleasure listening to the members from Haldimand–Norfolk and Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington. They both have different approaches to speaking, they're both different personalities, but they bring the truth to what this bill is really doing.

You know, Speaker, they bring up the point that this government, these Liberals, have spent 15 years driving up costs to electricity ratepayers, and now they think the constituents in Ontario are going to jump up and down and say, "Gosh, I'm getting 25% off now," or "I'm going to get 50% off if I'm in the country," when that doesn't even begin to touch what this government has done to the electricity system in Ontario. It's going to stretch the years of mistakes over 30 years—15 years of mistakes over 30 years. This is truly a remarkable thing, that this government is trying to sell to the public of Ontario on how you can take all their mistakes over 15 years, stretch them to 30, and everybody is supposed to be happy about it. And it does nothing to actually fix the underlying costs in the system that will still be there after the next election when this band-aid comes off.

We all know that this is an election bill. Whether the government wants to admit it or not, they do look at the

polls. They're not great, so they're hoping that the public will see this bill and help them raise their numbers up, but we see that that is not happening. We don't know what they're going to try and pull the next time, trying to raise their polling numbers, because this certainly hasn't helped them at all. Also, the bill means the return of the debt retirement charge. That's just truly incredible, that this government would try to slip this under the noses of our constituents in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's my pleasure to rise on behalf of the constituents of Windsor West to talk about the Fair Hydro Act, which is a misnomer if I've ever heard one. More specifically, I want to add comment to the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, although the title of his riding takes up nearly my whole two minutes.

He basically talked, as other members have, about how this government is not really addressing the issues within the hydro system, and how they're basically just kicking the problem down the road for future generations—and it's not even that far down the road. What we're looking at is that for the time being the rates will come down a little bit. Let's be clear: The government is talking about 25%. Eight per cent of that was a tax they put on the bills in the first place; it should never have been there. New Democrats pushed to not have it put on the bills; we pushed to have it taken off the bills. Now they're doing the right thing, finally, and taking it off, but they're only doing it to save their own hides during an election. Twenty-five per cent off bills when, since the year 2000—so it started under the Conservatives and their privatization scheme; it has continued under the Liberals. Since the year 2000, the cost of hydro has gone up 300%—300%. So really, what is 25% off a bill, especially when you look at how much it's going to cost down the road? Another \$40 billion for something that the majority of people in Ontario didn't want the government to sell off in the first place, don't own anymore, but they're continuing to pay off the mismanagement of the Liberal government.

The government is only doing this because we're facing an election next year and they're hoping that by pretending to offer some relief, the people of this province will forgive them for all of their wrongdoings so far. I don't think they have given the people of this province enough credit to see through this scheme.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington can respond.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thanks to the members from Essex, Perth–Wellington, Windsor West and the President of the Treasury Board for their comments on the debate tonight.

I said in my debate that this is an unparliamentary government; it is. It's unparliamentary. It's unrepresentative. It is undemocratic, the way they are bringing their bills through this House and ramming them through.

It is also patently unfair and unjust what they are doing to the people of Ontario with Bill 132 and the cost that they are putting on people. This is a subprime policy, this Bill 132. It's subprime and it's being advanced by a subprime-debtor government, which has gone into a subprime debt, looking for more debt as a way to solve the problems that they have created for them electorally—but the financial problems that they have created for the people of Ontario. This is an electoral problem for them, but for the people of Ontario, this is a financial hardship that so many have not been able to weather. They have not been able to carry the extreme burden placed on them by this Liberal government and their subprime schemes—\$43 billion more.

Speaker, I said it was hard to engage in parliamentary debate, using parliamentary language, when you have a government that is not operating in a parliamentary way. I just don't know what else to say, but these people are screwing the people of Ontario, and it's time to stop.

Interjections.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I withdraw.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm sorry, he already withdrew.

Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to add very few words onto the record and to this important bill. Let's be clear: Electricity is not a luxury. Electricity is something that each and every one of us needs in order to be able to function in our society, in order to be able to raise your family, to get up and get ready to go to work, to heat your home, to put the lights on.

I can tell you that, in some parts of my riding, just north of the highway by Ivanhoe Lake, there were a number of my constituents who did not have electricity. We worked really, really hard to bring them electricity, because without electricity, life is really tough. We all know that having access to electricity is a must. It's something that everybody needs. We have no selection as to, "Oh, I think I'm going to buy my electricity from Hydro One. Oh no, you have a better deal with Sudbury Hydro"—none of that. Whatever line comes to your home, this is who you pay your bill to. In most of Nickel Belt, we pay our bill to Hydro One.

You look at what has happened to our electricity system. The first thing that has happened is that they decided—that's the Liberal government—to privatize green energy. What a mistake that was. First of all, the minute that you bring in for-profit, then a common good such as electricity is not viewed as a common good anymore, because some people stand to make a profit and some people don't. If you look down any roads, any avenues, any streets in Nickel Belt, you see the great big hydro poles, the big ugly wires that go all over the place, but nobody ever complains about those. How come we don't complain about those? Because they are part of the common good. We know that we all have to share in those ugly poles and those ugly wires because it is for the good of all of us. But the minute you bring in the for-

profit, then it is not for the good of all of us anymore; it is for the good of a few.

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Then, when you forget the human element of it, you start to have problems. You start to have people who oppose things related to green energy, not because we don't believe in keeping our planet clean and not because we don't believe in having clean energy, but because of the way they brought that forward. Had they brought the Green Energy Act under a not-for-profit model, under a co-op model, under an ownership of First Nations, an ownership of public good such as municipalities and townships and co-ops and not-for-profits, then everybody would have benefitted and you would not see the huge opposition you see in parts of our province against clean energy—again, not because Ontarians don't believe in keeping our planet healthy, but simply because they felt disrespected by the decisions that the Liberal government has made to completely bypass the common good so that a few Liberal-connected friends of the Liberal government could bid on those very, very lucrative contracts.

When the Auditor General pointed out that some of the contracts are really, really expensive to the ratepayers of Ontario, they actually attacked our Auditor General, something that I hadn't seen. I have been on public accounts for many years in this Legislature. I love being on public accounts. This is where we review the Auditor General, the different reports that he, and now she, makes to this Legislative Assembly. Some of them are pretty harsh, but even when the report of the Auditor General comes and they show that we're not getting value for money, most of the time, the ministry accepts them, looks at the new information, and says, "This is a reason to do better. This is a reason why we should change things and make things better."

But when she brought forward and showed that the money we were spending on those contracts was completely out of the chart, they attacked her. They didn't say, "We got it wrong." They didn't say, "We will try to do things better." They attacked the Auditor General, which was pretty bad.

Then, after all of those very lucrative contracts are out there, with people who donate to the Liberal government time and time and time and time again—and if they don't donate enough, they are invited to another fundraiser at \$9,000 a plate for a piece of rubber chicken, to make sure that they donate to the Liberal government for having them awarded all of those lucrative contracts.

Then they brought in the smart meter. I don't know who ever dreamed up this terminology—a smart meter—but if you come from where I come from, from Nickel Belt, we have other names for them. This is a \$2-billion investment into smart meters that never worked in my end of the province. The smart meters were never able to send their data, so I had constituent after constituent coming to me with bills that did not make sense whatsoever. How can you spend \$12,000—yes, \$12,000—for one month of hydro in the middle of the summer when there was nothing on your camp? But the camp was

hooked onto a smart meter, and then we had to go through this rigmarole: the smart meter had to be tested and retested. It was always the ratepayer's fault that things were not working and they were put through all sorts of hoops to jump through, but always had to pay, until we started to phone the Ombudsman and tell the Ombudsman that something was drastically wrong. It's no surprise to you, Speaker, that I had over 100 constituents in Nickel Belt call because we were all having problems. I was one of the people who was having problems. Finally, they disconnected us from the smart meters. We still have those things attached to our houses, but we're not paying smart meter rates. They don't work in my end of the province, in most of my riding. We have paid to have those smart meters installed all throughout Nickel Belt, but we're not getting any value for them.

Not only was that a mistake that should have been thought about better, but the NDP told the Liberals from the start that time-of-use pricing—which is a policy of this government that has brought our hydro bills higher, which they're trying to decrease right now, but made our hydro bills higher—was going to bring hardship to some specific people. But they plowed ahead. It was going to encourage Ontarians to save on electricity. I have nothing against saving on electricity. I try the best I can, and so does everybody else that we know, but you know, when the bus is coming at 7:30 or at 8:30, you still have to feed your kids before they go; you can only eat raw food for so long. After a while, it's nice to have a bowl of porridge in the winter and it's nice to have toast rather than a piece of bread, and all of this will happen in prime time. It doesn't matter that you are 100% committed to saving energy; you have no choice.

The same thing with small business: If you're a pizzeria like the one in Walden in my riding, and you are on time-of-use—because time-of-use works in Lively; that's about the only part of Nickel Belt where it works—it doesn't matter that they have changed their oven, that they've changed the way they do their dough and prepare the food and all of this; they still have to cook those pizzas at prime time. It doesn't matter how much they want to try to save on electricity to bring their costs down, people want to have pizza for supper; they don't want it at 11 at night. Some people do, but most families don't. So you can start to see that—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I apologize to the member for Nickel Belt. I have to ask the members on this side of the House to lower their tone. It's getting quite loud, and I need to hear the member for Nickel Belt.

The member for Nickel Belt has the floor.

M^{me} France Gélinas: You can start to see how a number of decisions that were made, one after the other, were poorly thought out. Then came the whammy of them all, the one where they decided to sell our public asset, the one where they decided to privatize our electricity system. Don't get me wrong; the Conservatives had already started privatization. We have a lot of

energy generation that is made by private companies. But the Liberals took it a gigantic step forward towards privatization. Although, much to my surprise, they have never used the word that they have "privatized" Hydro One; they use weasel words that don't always make much sense to me. They will say, "We have broadened the ownership of Hydro One." What does broadening the ownership of Hydro One have to do with privatizing the majority of—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I need to ask the member to withdraw that unparliamentary comment.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I withdraw, Speaker.

2010

What does broadening the ownership of Hydro One have to do with the fact that they are actually selling Hydro One to private investors? Did you know, Speaker, that we are no longer a majority shareholder in this strategic public asset that is our electricity and our transmission system?

When you look to our neighbours to the east, to Quebec, or our neighbours to the west, to Manitoba, you can see how Quebec has used this public ownership of power to grow their economy, to diversify their economy, to make sure that northern Quebec has an opportunity to grow and prosper. Why? Because the province of Quebec owns Hydro-Québec. They own the generation, the transmission and the distribution. They own it all.

What happened in Ontario? The generation and the distribution had already taken many steps towards privatization when the PCs were in power, and then the Liberals put privatization into overdrive by selling Hydro One. They sold it in tranches; I don't know why they use a French word to say "parts," but anyway. Tranche, in English, means "parts," so they sold parts of Hydro One a little bit at a time, to the point where now we don't own 51% of it anymore. Private owners own Hydro One.

What does that mean? That means that we have lost a very significant public asset to help our province grow—to direct financial resources to where they are needed, to be strategic about how we make sure that we have wealth production in every part of our community. You'll remember, Speaker, that I started my 20 minutes by saying that electricity is a must. It's not a luxury; it's something that we all need. Not only do we all need it, but all businesses need it.

We are now a minority stakeholder in our electricity system, and Hydro One is a private, for-profit company. Big bankers and other movers and shakers in the financial markets now own this strategic asset that should belong to us. That's why, in the NDP plan, we will make sure that we regain this asset. We will make sure that we treat this public good the way it should be treated by making it public, making sure that each and every one of us uses it.

The same thing would happen with smart meters and time-of-use pricing. For some households, they are able to adapt to time-of-use pricing. This is something that is worthwhile for them and keeps encouraging them to save energy and to use energy at the time when it is the

cheapest. If it works for you, good for you, and please keep it. But if it doesn't—and now I think of all of the people who are on oxygen concentrators. It's not something that you turn on and off. Most people who require oxygen will require it when they are up, during peak hours. It's not like you will be able to shut it off. Anybody who has children at home whom they need to get ready to go to school will have to use electricity during peak hours. Anybody who receives home care—if you have somebody who comes and helps you with your bath or helps you with your laundry or dishes or anything else that allows you to stay in your home, you're not going to tell the PSW, "Please come back for my bath after 9 o'clock at night because I can't afford to do my laundry or to have my bath during peak hours." For a lot of people, they will do their part; they will save energy. But time-of-use does not work for them. They should have the opportunity to opt out if that makes more sense to them.

For the people in Nickel Belt, they didn't give us that opportunity. They simply took it away because it never worked. It was never able to connect. I want to thank the Ombudsman for the fantastic job that he did with his review of hydro to make sure that we brought all of those people who had hydro bills that did not make any sense whatsoever—and were able to get dealt with semi-fairly. Some of them, I would still say, had to pay way too much money before they got compensated, but eventually most of them got something that they could live with, and I would like to thank them.

But, you know, Speaker, if the same thing happened now, we would not be able to call the Ombudsman because the Liberal government decided to take all of those watchdogs, which are there to protect the public, and strip them of their power. So now the Auditor General cannot go in and do a review like she had done before. If something derails like it did when they brought out the smart meters and we had all of the billing issues with Hydro One, the Ombudsman could not go in.

C'est la même chose avec le commissaire aux services en français. Hydro One est supposé d'offrir des services en français à ceux qui le veulent. Tu peux identifier si tu veux recevoir ta facture mensuelle en français, en anglais ou de façon bilingue. Mais, en ce moment, si tu ne reçois pas tes services en français d'Hydro One, c'est bien malheureux, mais tu ne pourras pas appeler M. Boileau, tu ne pourras pas appeler le commissaire aux services en français parce que lui non plus n'a plus le droit de regard.

Pourtant, ces gens-là faisaient un bon travail et ont prouvé, par leur rapport, qu'ils ont aidé à améliorer le système d'électricité en Ontario, mais le gouvernement libéral voulait s'assurer que les investisseurs privés n'avaient pas besoin de montrer ce qu'ils faisaient à personne. En étant tous les chiens de garde, le côté privé, qui domine maintenant Hydro One, peuvent faire ce qu'ils veulent, quand ils le veulent, comme ils le veulent parce qu'il n'y a plus aucune façon pour nous de s'assurer, de regarder ce qui va là. Ni la vérificatrice générale : elle ne peut plus regarder leurs livres.

L'ombudsman ne peut plus recevoir de plaintes. Le commissaire aux services en français ne peut plus recevoir de plaintes, lui non plus.

All this to say, Speaker, that now, in a Hail Mary pass at the last minute, they decided to refinance the debt. Refinance the debt—we all know that anybody that has ever had to remortgage their house knows that they end up paying more interest charges. We know that we will be paying way more interest charges on the investments that were made that are now not owned by us, but owned by the dealers and wheelers on Bay Street. So not only will we be paying \$40 billion more, we will be paying \$40 billion more for an asset that is so strategic and that we won't own anymore.

This is what they call a plan? This is what I call a failure.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I think that everyone here can tell how eager we are on this side of the Legislature to leap to our feet to speak in response. I know that the member from Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale will be happy to add his comments at some point in the rotation.

Of course, we all listened closely on this side to the member from Nickel Belt and her comments. When I listen to members of the NDP caucus, the members of the third party here in the chamber, I hear a lot of ideological thrusts coming from them on this particular topic. I certainly hear a great deal of—I guess I would say—verve that is brought to the discussion from members from that side.

What I don't hear a lot of, Speaker, not only here this afternoon or this evening in debate but throughout the discussion over many, many months with respect to electricity pricing, is a feasible, practical or tangible plan of any sort. Again, here tonight, listening to the member from Nickel Belt speak, I heard a lot of complaints about different aspects of the electricity system but, really, I didn't hear much in the way of direct commentary about this specific legislation and our ambitious plan to make sure that we are providing more relief when it comes to electricity pricing for the hard-working people of this province that we on this side of the House are extremely proud to represent. I would strongly encourage members of both the NDP caucus and the Conservative caucus to do their best to come forward, collaborate and work with us on actual plans to get to the nub of the problem here, instead of tossing out the remarks that are being tossed out throughout the debate and in many opportunities here in the House.

2020

I certainly look forward to the rest of the debate here this evening. Again, I think when you look at the plan that we have in this legislation, it moves us forward, in the direction we committed to move forward in, and I certainly anticipate hearing more enlightened commentary from the government side of the House on this matter.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: The member from Nickel Belt spoke a fair bit about some of the challenges, and one of the big challenges certainly is the Green Energy Act that came in in 2009. Some \$5.8 billion of a \$6.3-billion amount that we have actually paid the States and Quebec to take our surplus power is a challenge, and they haven't really addressed it. It's not fair that we're putting the burden onto our kid and grandkids—\$133 billion is going to be the cost of the Green Energy Act.

We have asked over and over again to put a moratorium on wind turbines. We don't need more power at this point. They could have done that, and that would have been fair. We've asked them to actually give back and restore democracy in regard to local municipalities for things like wind turbines—they haven't done that.

I want to respectfully remind the Liberals at this point that because of their mismanagement, their mistakes and their ideology, we've lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs and forced hydro rates up by some 400% since 2003, while outages have increased by 275%. Again, to tell people they're going to get a 25% discount when you've actually been responsible for a 400% increase doesn't really help.

In my backyard there's a campground, Saugeen Cedars campground; their hydro bill went from \$8,000 to \$36,000 in about a four-year period. A 25% rebate of her own money isn't really going to cut it for that person, and she has seen through that. She called me and said, "Bill, all this is doing is moving the yardstick. It's moving the debt out. I still have to pay my bill every month, and, at the end of the day, this is not going to be something that's going to help me stay in business." Many businesses, frankly, are leaving our province because of these types of things.

If it was fair, they would tell people that they're actually moving debt onto OPG's books and not theirs because they wanted to be able to say, "I have a balanced budget." We all know that there is a \$5-billion hole in their budget and part of that is moving the shell game of energy costs.

We wanted to see true fairness for Ontarians. We wanted to see them tell the truth. It's about trust; it's about integrity. We wanted to ensure that the kids who are looking at them every day know that they're telling them truly the state of our finances.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I want to congratulate and thank our colleague the member from Nickel Belt for her discussion here today. She related important information about her constituency and the people who live there and the absolute dire need for them to have access to affordable hydro. In some circumstances in remote areas and rural areas of Madame Gélinas' riding, those folks can't make the choice to escape from hydro because they don't have access to other forms of heating, and it just isn't feasible to heat your home through cutting that

much wood over the fall to stock up. They are at the whim of this government when it comes to them controlling hydro rates, and unfortunately, time has run out.

People have lost faith in this government and in this Premier to do the right thing. Why? Because at every opportunity they've shown to us and to Ontarians that they are incapable of making a decision based on what's right for the people in our communities. They are driven by political expediency and opportunism, and this is another clear example of them doing that. It couldn't be any clearer. I wish it wasn't the case. I wish they took a real hard look at the decisions that they're making.

In fact, we have warned them over the years of the slippery slope and the downward spiral that privatization has on Ontarians. They were warned nearly 100 years ago by Sir Adam Beck, who said, "Build an iron wall around public hydro to protect it from the politicians and the bankers." Unfortunately, the Premier has torched that iron wall and is in the process of selling it for scrap.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted McMeekin: I'm pleased to finally get a chance to add a few words on this issue. I am old enough to remember the jingle, "Live better electrically." Remember that? I only mention that because I think it is symbolic of the difficulty that this Legislative Assembly has had on the hydro issue.

I want to say that no one is guilty, but we're all responsible. For the last 27 years, governments of three different iterations have managed to—I heard the words "screw up," but that's not parliamentary, so I'll withdraw that—cause some difficulty. The difference, I think, is that one party messed it up and broke the toys but didn't stay around long enough to fix them. Another party was an interim kind of thing. There was a whole year the Legislative Assembly didn't meet.

I'm reminded of Sterling Hunt, a famous dairy farmer up my way, who said, "The secret in politics is to tell them what's broke and how you're going to fix it." That's what our government is trying to do. There have been a lot of ups and downs, a lot of bumps on the way here, but we're not prepared to have one generation share the costs for 30 years of occasional mismanagement on different aspects of this file.

We're doing that. We're going to make sure that we continue our record of closing coal plants, ending brownouts and making a strong, stable system. In fact, when I talk to people who are investing in Ontario and ask them why, they say, "Three reasons: One is a great health care system; second, we have a very stable electricity program; and thirdly, the finest health care system in the world." We're going to build on that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Nickel Belt can now respond.

Mme France Gélinas: I'd like to thank the Minister of Transportation, the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, my colleague from Essex and the member from Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Westdale for their comments.

Here we are, seven days before the House rises, and we finally get this bill that is supposed to change everything. Ontarians have been having a really hard time paying their hydro bills. A lot of Ontarians have been facing energy poverty and having to make decisions that nobody should have to make: "Should I pay for my groceries, pay my hydro bill, pay my mortgage or pay for my medication?" Those are decisions that nobody should be faced with because the cost of hydro has just skyrocketed.

The fact that they refuse to see the direct link between privatization of our electricity system and increases in our hydro bills is really hard to swallow. There is a direct link. The more profit you pay, the more money the consumers have to pay. Plus, it's all of the missed opportunity to use this asset for common good, the common good that would grow our economy, that would grow our province and that would bring fairness throughout our province to make sure that everyone gets to share in prosperity, no matter where you live, because we all need electricity.

But no. What we have is a borrowing scheme that will cost us \$40 billion of interest more than if we did not pass this bill. I'm very conscious that we have a majority Liberal government who will pass this through the House as fast as they can because they don't want to hear from Ontarians, because they don't want to hear—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much.

Further debate.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'm certainly pleased to stand in my place and address this bill. This bill was designed to disguise the reality of the situation, to disguise the disaster of this Liberal government's own making. It's designed to disguise the way the government is trying to buy themselves out of this disaster by mortgaging our grandchildren's future. That's what it does, and the government knows that's what it does.

So what do they tell us? They tell us the opposite, and the bill reads as follows: "The government of Ontario is committed to ensuring that the costs of financing these investments and the associated charges to consumers are allocated fairly among present and future generations." That says a lot about how this government decides fairness. How is it fair to punish future generations with more crippling debt? And why don't the Liberals admit the real reason for soaring hydro rates, which is the bad contracts they've locked us into for 20 years?

2030

Before I get into the actual bill, I want to spend some time exploring how we got here in the first place; that is, how bad Liberal policy and incompetence have burdened Ontario families with some of the highest hydro prices in North America. Indeed, for 14 years this Liberal government has pushed Ontario into an energy crisis. They're using the shiny bauble of the so-called Fair Hydro Act to distract from their record, which has driven families into poverty. It has driven businesses to shutter their doors. It's a track record that any government should be ashamed of.

We can trace this disaster back to the Green Energy Act, which was passed by the Liberals with the help of the NDP. This framework required buying huge amounts of overpriced wind and solar energy that Ontario doesn't need.

I would like to also say, Speaker, I'll be sharing my time with the member from Sarnia-Lambton.

The Liberals went ahead and locked taxpayers into 20-year energy contracts that were handed out to Liberal donor companies.

In her 2015 annual report, the Auditor General laid out the shocking numbers behind this ill-conceived hydro plan. I'd like to quote a few sections from this report:

"Over the last decade, this power system planning process has essentially broken down, and Ontario's energy system has not had a technical plan in place for the last 10 years. Operating outside the checks and balances of the legislated planning process, the Ministry of Energy has made a number of decisions about power generation that have resulted in significant costs to electricity consumers."

The report goes on to talk about the rise in hydro costs:

"Meanwhile, the cost of electricity in Ontario has been steadily increasing. From 2004 to 2014, the amount that residential and small-business electricity consumers pay for the electricity commodity portion (includes global adjustment fees) of their bill has increased by 80%, from 5.02 cents/kWh to 9.06 cents/kWh."

And finally, the burden of expensive wind and solar energy:

"We calculate that electricity consumers have had to pay \$9.2 billion ... more for renewables over the 20-year contract terms under the ministry's current guaranteed-price renewable program than they would have paid under the previous program."

The facts are clear, Mr. Speaker: People have seen their hydro bills skyrocket under this terrible scheme.

Here's another thing that's outrageous: It's outrageous that Ontario continues to export cheap surplus energy at a loss to our neighbours south of the border. We have way more capacity than we need, and in many cases we pay them to take it. I'm sure our American friends are happy to be getting hydro at such a bargain, but I don't think that sentiment is shared by the people of Ontario who are getting ripped off. Since 2009, Ontario has given away \$6 billion in surplus energy to the United States—\$6 billion.

Here's another alarming fact: Since 2015, the Liberal government has spilled or abandoned three billion kilowatt hours of energy from water-power facilities that Ontario bought and paid for decades ago—one of the greenest energy sources around, and we're just letting the water spill over the falls. At the same time, executives at Hydro One are raking in stupidly high salaries, including \$4.5 million for the CEO last year.

To make things worse, the government has also put Hydro One on the auction block, selling shares of the company at fire-sale prices. Over 200 municipalities have

passed resolutions saying that this was short-sighted, but the Liberals did it anyway.

The impacts of this Liberal hydro crisis are not theoretical. The government's terrible handling of hydro has caused real pain for hard-working families and business owners.

I've got a couple of stories I would like to share from residents of my own riding of Perth–Wellington. The first comes from Conroy Schelhaas, who owns the Forest Motel outside of Stratford. Conroy approached me earlier this year with a big problem: His hydro bills are out of control. Last year, Conroy paid over \$21,000 for electricity. That's despite investing over \$90,000 in energy-efficient upgrades, including almost \$12,000 in the LED light bulb retrofit program.

I heard a similar story from Mike Carter, who operates the Foodtown grocery store in Milverton. Mike also spent lots of money on energy-efficient lighting. He even replaced his freezers and refrigerators—a major investment. But how did Hydro One respond to Mike's energy efficiency upgrades? They jacked up his delivery charges by more than double. His overall bill went up 30% too.

The effects are more far-reaching than homes and businesses, however. Hospitals, long-term-care facilities and schools are also feeling the weight of crushing hydro rates. In Perth–Wellington, the government has continued to systematically cut and/or freeze funding to Ritz Lutheran Villa and Mitchell Nursing Home. Community Living organizations across the province haven't seen a core operating funding increase in nine years. These organizations, which serve the most vulnerable amongst us, are being forced to cut the quality of care because of chronic underfunding. Rising hydro prices certainly don't help.

Here is what's amazing: Until recently, the Liberals didn't seem to care about this hydro crisis, but then somebody at Liberal headquarters noticed the upcoming election. Somebody noticed that the Liberals' polling numbers were in free fall. Faced with single-digit approval numbers for their failing government, the Liberals suddenly became very interested in fixing their hydro mess.

Predictably, the solution they cooked up was almost as bad as the mess it's supposed to fix. Millions of taxpayer dollars spent on partisan vanity ads can't solve that problem. Rather than take responsibility for the cost of resolving this hydro crisis in this year's budget, the Liberals just refinanced their terrible green energy contracts and shifted the burden to future taxpayers. Our kids and grandkids will still be paying for Liberal mistakes some 30 or 40 years from now.

The result of the Liberals' budget shell game is a temporary drop in hydro prices just in time for next year's election. At the same time, they've added another \$25 billion to the already massive provincial debt. Members on the other side may think they're being very clever with this new hydro scheme, but I can tell you that the residents of Ontario are not fooled.

Here are a few examples of what people in Perth–Wellington have been saying:

"This is just another vote-grabbing/popularity scheme aimed at next year's election! Please add my voice to the cash grab associated with 'cap-and-trade' and the high delivery charge added to our electricity bill monthly."

This constituent wrote me about the financial pressures she is facing as a result of rising hydro rates:

"Last week I spent a few hours trying to figure out what might possibly be the absolute minimum our hydro bill could run each month. I was on the phone with Hydro One going through every delivery, service, and regulation fee possible. It was a mathematical nightmare. How are regular customers supposed to be able to follow that?

"From what I could figure out, for us to only run the fridge and freezer in the summer months our bill would be \$70.49/month. No hot food (unless we cooked on the fire, but due to not enough rain there is a fire ban), no lights, no dehumidifier in the basement, no laundry, no hot water, no charging devices of any kind, etc.

"We are on electric heat, and keep the thermostat at 16 degrees in the winter. I have not worked our lowest possible winter hydro math yet (fridge, freezer, two heaters set at 16 degrees" Celsius). "It is too terrifying."

I would like to turn it over to my colleague from Sarnia–Lambton.

2040

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Sarnia–Lambton.

Mr. James J. Bradley: He should have a question.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I agree with the chief government whip that I should have a question. I'm going to take it up with my House leader. I appreciate your support.

Mr. James J. Bradley: I will help you out.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you.

It's my pleasure to rise today and speak to Bill 132, the Fair Hydro Act—quite a title. Certainly, I've enjoyed the debate. I've been in the House all day. I am on House duty today, so I've certainly heard all of the debate ad nauseam.

Mr. Bill Walker: A great job—

Mr. Robert Bailey: A great job. I take that vote of confidence, a great job as whip, as my colleague from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound said.

Last week, my office received a letter from the Minister of Energy informing me that Bill 132, the Fair Hydro Act, had been tabled in the Legislature, just a little over 10 weeks since the government first announced this scheme. It is always pleasant to receive letters from my colleagues, and it is no different than receiving a letter from the minister.

The fact is that energy pricing consistently has been the number one issue that I have written about to this Minister of Energy and his predecessors in my 10 years as the MPP for Sarnia–Lambton. Since the honourable member from Sudbury accepted the appointment as Minister of Energy last June, I have written or questioned the minister on rising energy rates well over a dozen times.

A few weeks ago, I asked the minister about the impact his high hydro rates were having on volunteer

groups. As you might remember, Mr. Speaker, the Sarnia Sisterhood of Quilters—try saying that late at night—were facing the prospect of losing space at a local church that donated to them so they could work on their comfort quilts for victims of disease, crime and tragedy a few days a month. The cost to heat and light the space has become too much for the church to afford without charging a rental fee, and these people were all volunteers.

In March, I also brought to the minister's attention the case of an 83-year-old constituent who was keeping the temperature of her house in the low teens because her only option was electric baseboard heat. She was regularly receiving hydro bills of between \$500 and \$600 a month. She had emptied her savings trying to stay up to date with her bills, but she had now fallen hundreds of dollars behind. But that comes as no surprise.

Last August, we learned through the Ontario Energy Board that there were almost 3,600 customers of Blue-water Power in Sarnia–Lambton who are in arrears. That number—and this is a couple of days ago—as of this morning, still sits at 2,554 people in arrears. Some of these people have no prospect of getting out from under the debt this government has placed on them through high hydro rates.

I have seen these same bills in my office. In fact, I have forwarded every bill that I have received at the office to the Minister of Energy so that he too can see what these people are facing. For a long time, the minister's standard response to high energy bills was that not enough people were using the Ontario Electricity Support Program. But unfortunately, the reality is, many of these people facing energy poverty just don't qualify for this benefit.

When responding to many of the letters that I have written to the minister, the minister likes to say, "The government continues to be committed to making everyday life easier for all Ontarians and that includes helping consumers manage their electricity costs."

I think many people in Ontario would argue that folks could manage their electricity costs just fine by themselves before Premier Wynne or Premier McGuinty started meddling with things. Rising energy prices have been an issue in my riding for my constituents for as long as I have been a member of this Legislature. I have mentioned this before, but it bears mentioning again. I think I've been raising concerns about the rising costs of energy in this Legislature going all the way back to March 9, 2009. I just happen to have a quote from March 9, 2009. The debate that day was—oh, what do you know?—the Green Energy and Green Economy Act. You never hear that anymore, green energy and green economy. Here's what I said in that debate more than eight years ago when I had the opportunity: This "bill will do nothing but impose new costs on the energy system and consumers, that what it in fact is going to do is create a new bureaucracy with very little accountability to both the ratepayers and to the Legislature. We also don't believe that the government has really figured out how

much this is going to cost consumers at the very end, and we believe that their initial estimates are way off."

I'll just remind the House that the Minister of Energy at that time, the Honourable George Smitherman, insisted that those bills would only increase about 1% a year as a result of the Green Energy and Green Economy Act. I think the only thing that was green about the bill was the money that was sucked out of people's and consumers' pockets.

I think what we've seen play out over the last eight years is that the warnings and criticisms of the bill that the official opposition put forward during that debate have pretty much become reality in Ontario. Constituents now have triple-digit delivery and global adjustment charges on their bills each month; rates have more than doubled since 2009. When I made those comments in March 2009, the off-peak price of energy was 4 cents per kilowatt hour and the on-peak was 8.7 cents per kilowatt hour. Today, off-peak is 8.7 per kilowatt hour and on-peak is 18 cents per kilowatt hour—more than double the price in just five years, and certainly more than the 1% that the honourable minister at that time spoke about.

For the average family, electricity prices are up more than \$1,000 per year since the Liberal government took office. How does that happen? Let's look at the facts. On May 1, 2015, rates went up \$68; on November 1, 2015, they went up \$53; on January 1, 2016, they went up \$96; on May 1, 2016, they went up another \$38. This May 1 increase is the one that got under people's skin, because the government justified the increase by saying that people hadn't used enough energy over the winter months. They just hadn't used enough, so they had to recoup the costs for the energy producers who signed those guaranteed contracts with the government.

In all, in just one year, from May 1, 2015, to May 1, 2016, rates went up for the average family by \$255 a year, and sadly it's not stopping there. The Ministry of Energy's own long-term energy plan predicts that the average monthly residential energy bill will increase between another 26% to 36% over the next 15 years, or around \$500 to \$750 a year—a long-term problem for the people of Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, having heard all I've heard today and going back in time and looking at what I said in March 2009, I have no other option but to call for the adjournment of the debate today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. Bailey has moved the adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 2047 to 2117.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. Bailey has moved the adjournment of the debate. All those in

favour of the motion will please rise as a group and remain standing to be counted by the table.

All those opposed to the motion will please stand as a group and remain standing to be counted by the table.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 1; the nays are 43.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I declare the motion lost.

The member for Sarnia–Lambton has the floor.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do want to have on the record that that's the first time that the Liberal government hasn't supported me in some bill or something like that.

Interjection: —the pension.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes, I'll move the pension next.

Anyway, I do want to thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've got a couple of minutes here.

In exchange for short-term relief, the province will be taking on an additional \$25 billion in costs from interest associated with stretching payments out over 30 years, and another \$2.5 billion will simply be shifted from the backs of ratepayers to those of taxpayers. These measures are window dressing. They're kicking the can down the road. The Liberal government is making no effort to deal with the systemic issues they've created.

For 14 years, this government has been methodically driving up the cost of hydro with programs that were designed to make them look good in the short term. Wind turbines, smart meters, solar technology: These were pursued without regard for cost or even for common sense. We all know about the bad contracts this government signed for green energy. We know the technology the government chose to subsidize was already out-of-date when it was installed.

Rural communities got industrial wind projects forced on them, giving us turbines that produce overly expensive electricity while ruining hundreds of acres of good farmland with concrete. Meanwhile, we lost good, affordable green energy. In 2015, the Liberals spilled or abandoned three billion kilowatt hours of energy from water power facilities that Ontario bought and paid for decades ago.

We also know that the companies that were awarded contracts for wind energy donated generously to the Liberal Party. These are policies that do not put the interests of families and businesses first. It's obvious to everyone that this bill is more of the same. It is immediately clear that the Liberal plan to cut 17% from hydro bills will cost the people of Ontario more in the long term. As it was announced, the long-term ramifications of that decision were widely reported.

I think I'm out of time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It was interesting listening to the speakers as they shared their time and talked about some of the bills that our constituents have brought to our offices. I had the same experience, where people would bring me their hydro bill and although they had used

very, very little hydro, their bill was still over 100 bucks because of the delivery charges.

In some parts of my riding, even if you do everything on earth to try to limit the amount of electricity that you use, even if you follow every guideline in the book to use as little as you can—and the member talked about keeping the thermometer low, doing as little as possible, not turning the lights on—still you get bills where the delivery charge is sometimes two, three, four or five times the amount that the energy is. What that does, Speaker, is it discourages anybody from doing energy conservation, because it does not matter how much effort you put into using less energy, your electricity bill does not go down.

To see that the government solution to all of this is to remortgage a debt, where we will end up having to pay for it long after everything will be in need of upgrades and in need of more investment, is really showing how out of touch the Liberal government has become with that file, where so, so many people are struggling. Yet, they refuse to restructure, and all they've put forward is the remortgaging.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Reza Moridi: Mr. Speaker, this is a great bill. I'm going to vote for it, and I invite all my colleagues in this House to vote for this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Gila Martow: It's funny that we're talking today about the fair hydro bill because I think it was the Globe and Mail that said, "What's fair about this?"

We had a Liberal confidential document leaked by a whistle-blower. I don't know who that whistle-blower was, but I want to invite them to leak a lot more documents. We're there for you. There's always food, coffee, whatever you need to support you in your hour of need.

But the fact is, Mr. Speaker, there's nothing fair about putting off debt from today onto tomorrow. I was speaking to my constituents, who are very concerned, and I said, "Would you take out a second credit card to pay your balance on the first credit card?" They said no, they wouldn't. I said, "Would you pay the minimum on your credit card if you had the money to pay it off and not pay high interest on your credit card?" They said, "No."

Well, that's basically what we're seeing here. Between smart meters that aren't so smart and fair energy bills that aren't so fair, this is the conundrum that the taxpayers of Ontario are in. We see people who are really concerned. We see students who have gotten university degrees and they thought that they were going to get some kind of employment that was going to be a reflection of what they wanted to do with their life and something positive, and they're not finding good employment.

Ontario should be the best province to live in, in the best country, Canada. Unfortunately, after 14 years of this Liberal government, that's just not happening in this

Ontario. It's the 150th anniversary of Canada, and I wish I could bring better news to the taxpayers of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Question and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to be able to speak on behalf of the residents of Timiskaming—Cochrane, especially on an issue that impacts them greatly, as it impacts all people across the province, specifically people in rural Ontario.

When we talk about hydro—I've been here for a few years, and we've been pushing the issue that hydro bills are hurting the people of rural Ontario, hurting all Ontarians, and I remember some of the comments we've gotten back from the Liberal government. One was that the hydro increases were barely a cup of coffee; why were we worried? Remember, they were barely a cup of coffee. And then the hydro increases—no, they weren't a crisis; they weren't a crisis. We have people in our ridings who are almost losing their homes, and some who have had to sell their homes because they can't pay their hydro bills.

So the government now, at the eleventh hour—but at the eleventh hour of their eleventh hour—decides, “Hold the phones, hydro is now a crisis.” And they come out with the fair Liberal hydro plan. That's what this is. The interesting part about the fair Liberal hydro plan is, actually, it's fairer for the Liberals than it is fair for the people. The people are going to end up paying for the fairer Liberal hydro plan, because all that's actually happening is that they're saying, in plain English, “Okay, folks”—although they don't say it like this, but the message is, “All you have to do now until the next election is over is pay the minimum payment on the credit card, on your hydro credit card,” and then after the election's over, poof, we go back and the balloon payments are at the end. You know what? They're not paying those payments; the people of Ontario are going to have to pay those payments. That's why we're voting against this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That's four questions and comments. We return to the member for Sarnia—Lambton to sum up.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a pleasure to rise. I thank the member from Nickel Belt, the Minister of Research and Innovation, the member from Thornhill and the member

from Timiskaming—Cochrane for those comments on the debate this evening and all day today.

I go back again—I want to just re-summarize. In March 2009, in response to the Green Energy Act, at that time I said that I was feeling a little bit prescient, predicting something I didn't have any idea about, how I could see nothing but trouble and cost. The minister at the time kept saying that it was going to be 1% a year, is all it was going to cost. That was proven wrong, and it certainly was wrong. This government spent 15 years driving up the cost of electricity to ratepayers, and all this bill does is stretch 15 years of mistakes over 30 years to pay for it. It still does nothing to fix the underlying costs in the system. They will still be there after the next election, when this mandate comes off. This means the return of the debt retirement charge, only on steroids. It'll be more than four times the cost of the old one.

This government has been unable to provide a clear accounting for all the costs, including interest, and potentially hundreds of millions paid out to bankers and bond traders that ratepayers will have to pay for for decades.

I noticed our critic this morning went through quite a litany of explanations of how this scheme—I've actually got his speech here. I want to read it later so I can understand it in greater detail.

Hon. Jeff Leal: We'll get it for you, Bob; don't worry.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you. The Minister of Agriculture says that he's going to get it for me. Thank you.

This isn't an electricity plan, it's a re-election plan, where Ontario ratepayers will get to pay a brand new debt retirement charge on steroids, starting right after the next election—if the Liberals are still in government; the jury is still out on that. The government accepted over 1,100 applications for new sole-sourced, highly subsidized contracts the day after this bill was—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It being 9:30 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 2129.



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